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SATURDAY, DEC. 22, 1900

### THE CASE OF "MISS" WYATT.

ONE of the most remarkable cases that has ever attracted the attention of the public occurred Friday, Dec. 14th, 1900, when ANNIE WYATT (white) was arraigned in the Police Court upon the charge of stealing from the apartment store of MAYNARD BROTHERS, corner Foushee and Broad Sts.

A law was enacted by the legislature of Virginia, giving Police Justices discretionary powers in cases of petit larceny (stealing). They can either fine or imprison or both. This was intended to shield certain influential people who might be guilty of theft.

Police Justice JOHN J. CRITCHFIELD has made it an inviolable rule to inflict jail punishment upon any and all persons guilty of this offense. Naturally when a white woman came before him, caught red-handedly, with the goods in her possession, it was expected by some that he would "break his rule."

On the other hand, it was known by those who knew him best that he would enforce the law, while tempering it with mercy.

We have in mind the case of a colored man guilty of a similar offense, having stolen large quantities of goods from a leading dry-goods store, and the cases against him were made up separately. The result was that he got a term in jail on all of them, aggregating five years. He may be in jail yet, for all that we know.

We knew then, at a glance, that if Police Justice CRITCHFIELD gave ANNIE WYATT, ninety days in jail, under ordinary circumstances, leaving out maudlin sympathy, a jury of white men would have given her about three years in the penitentiary.

But what did she do? The daily papers tell the story. Here is an account by one of them.

"After struggling along with the temptation of the world before her, for several years, without the guiding influences of real home-life, ANNIE WYATT, a young clerk in a large department store, and a Sunday-school teacher, succumbed to temptations and fell."

"Two or three days ago she was seen leaving the store with a bundle in her hand. This was against the rule of the house, and the matter was seriously considered by the proprietors. Later she was again noticed with a bundle under her arm, and she was approached by the floor-walker, who questioned her. She said the bundle was something that belonged to her sister, and she was taking it home for her. She was told to leave the package in the proper place and it would be sent by the wagon. A suspicion having arisen, her package was opened and found to contain articles belonging to the store."

"Several of the gentlemen interested went to the rooms of the young woman on West Marshall Street Thursday, and found enough goods to start a store. There were lace, silk, books, white goods and articles of almost every description to the value of several hundreds of dollars. It was also discovered that there were goods in the rooms belonging to another apartment house, amounting to several hundred dollars more. When the young woman realized her situation she broke down and wept and asked forgiveness and promised to do nothing wrong again."

At this rate the young woman in question could run a business at a greater profit than MAYNARD BROTHERS. Now, mark you, under the law, the persons residing in that house are amenable to the law for permitting the storing therein of these stolen goods.

But the most amusing part of the whole affair is the appeal to Governor J. HOAG TYLER.

Here is what is said about it:

"Governor Tyler will this afternoon grant a pardon to Miss ANNIE WYATT, the young woman sentenced a few days ago to serve a sentence of ninety days in jail for petit larceny. The Governor has been overwhelmed with letters, petitions and callers in behalf of the lady since the day she was sentenced. One of these letters was from Bishop Peabody, the Rev. Preston Nash, of this city, has also been untiring in his efforts to secure the freedom of the accused and to remove from her the stigma of an act of which she was technically guilty. Her counsel, L. O. Wendenburg, has also worked zealously for her."

Now here is a young woman found with a whole store outfit in her private dwelling, goods confessedly stolen, not from one dry-goods emporium, but from another, a fact which gives color to the suspicion that the place was a depot for stolen goods and that the WYATT girl was not alone in her pecuniary and yet she is said to be only technically guilty.

But the affair gets even more amusing if not more serious. It seemed that somebody was making a desperate effort to "bamboozle" the Governor, for here is what took place:

"Governor Tyler decided to have an interview with Miss WYATT for himself, and he accordingly instructed Deputy Buck Johnson to bring her to the Capitol. The officer complied, and at 1:15 o'clock he appeared. Miss WYATT, dressed in black, wearing a black veil, her face showing the greatest agony and suffering, her eyes red from weeping, entered the room occupied by private secretary Owen, where she was met by the Rev. Mr. Nash, who escorted her into the private office of the Governor."

We regret to learn of such absurd conduct. A prisoner, confessedly guilty of a felony of over \$50 worth of goods when stolen at any one time, carried into the presence of the Governor, and interviewed in order that a ninety-day jail sentence might be lifted from her shoulders.

All right, Gov. TYLER, all right! When one of the Negro female shop-lifters gets into a similar predicament, remember, please the precedent which you have set.

We do not believe that any colored minister of standing in Richmond could have been induced to go into court and before the Governor in behalf of a Sunday School teacher of his flock, who had been guilty of such conduct and had put up such flimsy excuses as are contained in the following recital:

"The story as disclosed to Governor Tyler is in substance as follows: When Miss WYATT was accused of the crime she was almost crazed, and did not know what to do. She was for a short time in the book department, and she took some books home with her to read in order to familiarize herself with their contents. She had certain household duties to perform, and in this way did not read the books. These she failed to return contrary to rules, expecting to find time to read them. It is this way a number accumulated. It was her purpose to read some of them to her aunt, with whom she lived, but the illness of the aunt prevented this. The Bibles and prayer-books were taken home in order that her aunt might select one to purchase for a gift."

"The various articles of wearing apparel are easily accounted for. Miss WYATT was twice engaged to be married, on both occasions her trousseau was completed, and both times just before the ceremony the groom-elect died. The trousseau was packed away. These were a part of the goods which Miss WYATT was accused of stealing. Other stuff found in Miss WYATT's apartment she says she purchased, many of them having been given her in payment of service while working with her aunt in a millinery store in Petersburg."

"When Miss WYATT was in court, having by advice of counsel pleaded guilty, she could make no defense, believing that her statement would be given no credence, and she was given the highest sentence possible. Now WYATT says that some of the articles which is alleged she took from the Meyer store were given her by the wife of a well-known clergyman. She declares that not an article found in her room, save books mentioned above, belonged to anyone except herself."

Now it is evident that the reporter who wrote that "ghost story" does not believe it himself for he remarks:

"Friends of Miss WYATT believe she is a victim of kleptomania, and say she has been so afflicted from childhood."

It is evident that the hard-working, industrious sales-ladies in the stores of this city cannot but consider the action of the WYATT girl's friends as a reflection upon them.

They naturally condemn any of their number guilty of such outrageous peculations. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are handled by the white sales-ladies of this city and every cent accounted for and it is to their interest to have all such characters as the one noted exposed and forced out of a business for which they are neither adapted or fitted.

We think Justice CRITCHFIELD was right and that Gov. TYLER has misanderstood the temperament and desires of the white ladies of Richmond now employed in these stores, when he imagines that in favoring ANNIE WYATT he is benefiting them.

Colored people of respectability are exposed to thieves and especially colored ones. They are against humanity,

disagreeable, insulting colored folks. They believe in honesty, and are in favor of upholding the law. That is why when shop-lifters of their race are caught no word in their behalf is spoken either from the pulpit or in their race journals.

Honesty is the best policy. It is wrong to make "flesh of one race, and fowl" of the other.

It may be that we may soon have a Negro ANNIE WYATT's case to engage the attention of our Governor, and when we do, we trust that he may be as careful and as kind in dealing with her as he has been in the case of this white female, whom it is hoped is suffering from kleptomania.

### JUST A FEW LINES MORE.

It seems that those enthusiasts, who interested themselves in the ANNIE WYATT case ran upon a regular "Gold-bribe" arrangement. The total amount stolen by her amounts to (\$1021.78) one thousand and twenty-one dollars and seventy-three cents.

Police Justice CRITCHFIELD is now no doubt smiling for he has proven that a pardon was virtually granted at the trial of the case for he exercised clemency of a sort, that leaves nothing for Gov. TYLER to do.

To steal a \$125 ham means ninety days in that court, and yet a white female who confessedly stole one thousand dollars worth of goods grumbles because she gets a light punishment. But here is a list of the articles stolen by this white female:

"Domestic goods, \$30.83; linings, \$43.87; lace, \$387.01; books, \$158.75. The volumes taken numbered over 200 including thirteen Bibles. The value of the articles not identified amounts to \$204.77. A B x was also identified by another firm containing articles valued at from \$150 to \$300. Miss WYATT was in charge of the lace and book stock."

Did she have co-federates? Just suppose Detective TOMLINSON, GIBSON, WHEAT and SCHLEY were to tell all that they know. But, enough, we are sorry for the young woman. Sorry that she did not accept the punishment meted her and sorry that she did not on her bended knees thank Justice CRITCHFIELD for virtually exercising the prerogatives of the Governor.

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IRON TOYS. Pony Cart and Driver, 19c. Bulky with Jokey, 18c. Dump-cart, with driver, 19c. Iron Hook-and-Ladder, 25c. Everything in wooden toys from 5c to \$1. Ten-pins, Pastry sets, Wash sets, Boats, Grocery stores, Dolls houses, Warehouses, Stables, Tables, Bedsteads, Chairs and Whole Suite of furniture. Games of all kinds from 5c to \$1.

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